

A message from County Council President Blair Ewing

The Montgomery County Council supports common-sense alternatives to relieve traffic congestion and discourage sprawl, while protecting our neighborhoods and the environment. That is why the County Council is unanimously opposed to the so-called “Techway.” County Executive Doug Duncan, Governor Parris Glendening, and the State of Maryland also oppose the project. Among the reasons are:

- Prior studies show that such a road would provide little relief to the Capital Beltway and the American Legion Bridge and mainly would promote longer distance travel and stimulate new trips.
- The cost of such a road would be enormous, consuming most available transportation funding for several years, severely diminishing our ability to provide for other transit and highway priorities. Though proponents have speculated that it would be a toll road, it is not at all certain that would be the case—or that tolls would cover the multi-billion-dollar project. According to estimates from the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, eight percent of Montgomery County residents work in Virginia—and many of those east of the current American Legion Bridge, rather than in the Dulles corridor.
- The road would either disrupt the County’s agricultural reserve—for which the County and State have spent many millions of dollars to preserve over the past two decades—or would slice through established residential neighborhoods. Montgomery County took the lead in the metropolitan area by assembling our nationally acclaimed agricultural reserve. The proposed six-lane, 200-yard wide “Techway” would slash through this green space and no amount of landscaping and vague and changeable “parkways with no exits” are going to change that reality. The alternative route would cut through established neighborhoods, affecting hundreds of homes.
- The County’s own “Commission on the Future”—which put economic development first and foremost as a County goal—also has voiced opposition to the project. “A second bridge would not only impact the County’s land use and open space policies but could also have a negative impact on the County’s job growth and economic development initiatives,” said its report.
- The project could potentially undermine Baltimore -Washington International Airport, in which Marylanders have invested billions, in favor of Dulles Airport. Many special interests, including the private Washington Airport Task Force, have pointed to plans for increased truck and freight traffic needs coming out of Dulles in urging that the “Techway” be designed for trucks.

As you may know, Virginia Congressman Frank Wolf, formerly a chief booster of the project, has recently taken another look and changed sides to oppose the project, canceling a federal study of it. "I have come to the conclusion that it would be very difficult, if not impossible to build a new bridge without negatively impacting established neighborhoods or cutting through parkland," Congressman Wolf said. "I thought perhaps there was still enough open space on both sides of the river...but...that does not appear to be the case."

Congressman Wolf's change of heart seems to be reflected in meetings on both sides of the river, involving hundreds of residents opposed to the project. This project seems to be a case of "the more you know, the more you oppose it." In a recent Gazette / Baltimore Sun / WTOP radio poll, Montgomery County residents chose building more mass transit over more roads to address traffic congestion, by 52 percent to 32 percent. A similar poll in Virginia showed 70 percent favored managing new growth with existing roads and mass transit as opposed to only 24 percent who favored building more roads.

Our priority instead is to provide more extensive and frequent transit service between points in Virginia and Maryland. These would include the Corridor Cities Transitway—light rail or bus service along the I-270 corridor—as well as a Purple Line rail line to connect with light rail planned from Tyson's Corner to Dulles Airport.

If a new highway must be built, both the State and County have made it clear to Virginia that we would not oppose it if it were built along the US 15 Corridor in Loudoun County. It would cross the Potomac near Point of Rocks and connect to US 340 west of Frederick. We also do not oppose an Eastern Regional Bypass, which would more directly serve through traffic between points north and south of the Washington area.